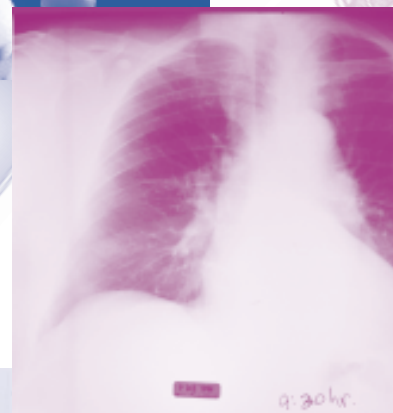


YOU CAN PREVENT PCP:

A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE
WITH HIV INFECTION



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service

CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL
AND PREVENTION



- PCP is the most common serious infection among persons with HIV. It can be fatal.
- PCP can be prevented and treated.
- TMP-SMX, also known as Bactrim, Septra, or Cotrim*, is the best medicine for preventing and treating PCP.
- You should take all medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

What is PCP?

Pneumocystis carinii (NEW-mo-SIS-tis CA-RIN-nee-eye) pneumonia, or “PCP,” is a severe illness found in people with HIV. It is caused by a germ called *Pneumocystis carinii*. Most people infected with this germ don’t get pneumonia because their immune systems are normal. People whose immune systems are badly damaged by HIV can get PCP. People with HIV are less likely to get PCP today than in earlier years. However, PCP is still the most common serious infection among people with AIDS in the United States.

How do I know if I have PCP?

If you have PCP, you probably will have fever, cough, or trouble breathing. People with PCP may die if the infection is not treated quickly. *See your doctor immediately if you have these symptoms.* PCP can be diagnosed only by laboratory tests of fluid or tissue from the lungs.



How do you catch PCP?

Most scientists believe PCP is spread in the air, but they don't know if it lives in the soil or someplace else. The PCP germ is very common. Since it is difficult to prevent exposure to PCP, you should get medical care to prevent PCP.

How can I protect myself from PCP?



PCP can be prevented. The best drug for preventing PCP is trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (try-METH-o-prim - sul-fa-meth-OX-uh-sole), or TMP-SMX. TMP-SMX is a combination of two medicines. It has many different brand names, such as Bactrim, Septra, and Cotrim*. Adults and older children can take

TMP-SMX as a tablet. You can also get TMP-SMX as a liquid.

I was vaccinated for pneumonia. Won't that protect me against PCP ?

No. The pneumonia vaccine protects you against another kind of pneumonia, but not against PCP. There is no vaccine for PCP.

When should I start treatment to prevent PCP?

You should have your blood tested regularly to check the strength of your immune system. Your doctor should prescribe TMP-SMX to prevent PCP if your CD4 cell count falls below 200. Your doctor may also put you on TMP-SMX if you show certain symptoms, such as having a temperature above 100°F that lasts for 2 weeks or longer, or if you get a fungal infection in the mouth or throat (commonly called "thrush"). Having thrush is believed to raise your risk for getting PCP.



What are the side effects of TMP-SMX?

TMP-SMX can make some people have a rash or feel sick. If the drug reaction is not severe, TMP-SMX should be continued because it works so much better than any other medicine to prevent PCP.

Are there other medicines to prevent PCP?

Yes. Check with your doctor about the possibility of other treatments. *Take all of your medicines as prescribed by your doctor. Don't change how many pills you are taking without speaking with your doctor.*

Can I get PCP more than once?

Yes. If you have already had PCP you can get it again. TMP-SMX can prevent second infections with PCP. Therefore, you should take TMP-SMX even after you have had PCP to prevent getting it again.

Can children get PCP ?



Yes. Children with HIV or AIDS can also get PCP. To learn more about children and PCP, call the AIDS Treatment Information Service at 1-800-448-0440.

Is PCP sexually transmitted ?

No. PCP is not sexually transmitted.

For more information, call:

Free referrals and information:

CDC National AIDS Hotline

English (800) 342-AIDS (2437)
[24 hours/day]

Spanish (800) 344-SIDA (7432)
[8 am-2 am EST]

TTY (800) 243-7889
(Deaf and hearing impaired)
[Monday-Friday 10 am-10 pm EST]

Free materials:

CDC National Prevention Information Network
(800) 458-5231

1-301-562-1098 (International)

P.O. Box 6003

Rockville, MD 20849-6003

Free HIV/AIDS treatment information:

AIDS Treatment Information Service (ATIS)

(800) 448-0440

Project Inform
(800) 822-7422

Drugs undergoing clinical trials:

AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service (ACTIS)
(800) 874-2572

Social security benefits:

Social Security Administration
(800) 772-1213

(You also may request a personal earnings and benefit estimate statement to help you estimate the retirement, disability, and survivor benefits payable on your Social Security record.)

To obtain information on the Child Health Insurance Program, please call:
1-877-KIDS NOW (1-877-543-7669).

CDC Division of HIV/AIDS Internet address:
http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids/dhap.htm

Other brochures in this series include:

Living with HIV/AIDS
Preventing Infections from Pets
Preventing Infections from Food
Preventing Infections When you Travel
You can Prevent Cryptosporidiosis
You can Prevent CMV
You can Prevent MAC
You can Prevent PCP in Children
You can Prevent Toxoplasmosis
You can Prevent Tuberculosis

*Use of trade names does not imply endorsement by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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